

## **Wyoming Department of Health**

### **Swine Influenza Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What is influenza?**

Influenza (flu) is a respiratory illness caused by a virus. Symptoms of the flu include fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches. While people frequently say “stomach flu” to describe vomiting, nausea, or diarrhea, these illnesses are almost always caused by viruses other than influenza, bacteria, or parasites. Influenza can cause severe illness and complications. About 36,000 Americans die each year from flu complications. Seasonal flu happens every year, usually in the winter months, and is generally predictable.

#### **What is swine flu?**

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Swine flu viruses have been reported to spread from person-to-person, but in the past, this transmission was limited and not sustained beyond three people.

#### **Are there human infections with swine flu in the U.S.?**

In late March and early April 2009, cases of human infection with swine influenza A (H1N1) viruses were first reported in Southern California and near San Antonio, Texas. Other U.S. states have reported cases of swine flu infection in humans and cases have been reported internationally as well. An updated case count of confirmed swine flu infections in the United States is kept at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/investigation.htm> CDC and local and state health agencies are working together to investigate this situation.

#### **Are there human infections with swine flu in Wyoming?**

In late May Wyoming confirmed its first case. Federal/State/Local Public health officials are working closely to monitor the situation. For up to date case counts please visit our website at <http://health.wyo.gov/phsd/epiid/swineflu.html>

#### **How long can an infected person spread swine flu to others?**

People with swine influenza virus infection should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic and possible for up to 7 days following illness onset. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

#### **How long can viruses live outside the body?**

We know that some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks. Frequent hand washing will help you reduce the chance of getting contamination from these common surfaces.

#### **How can I protect myself?**

- Frequently wash your hands with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer.
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve or cover your mouth and nose with a tissue.
- Avoid being around those who are ill as much as possible.
- Stay home from work or school when you are sick.
- Regularly disinfect common contact surfaces such as phones, counters and doorknobs.
- Follow the guidance offered by public health officials.

**How do we practice good hand hygiene?**

Caregivers should always wash hands before providing care. Afterward, wash again and apply alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Follow these steps for proper hand hygiene:

- Wet hands with warm, running water and apply liquid soap.
- Rub hands vigorously for at least 15 seconds, covering all surfaces and fingers.
- Scrub nails by rubbing them against the palms of your hands.
- Rinse hands with water.
- Dry hands thoroughly with a paper towel and use it to turn off the faucet. Shared towels spread germs.

**I have recently returned home from an area with confirmed swine influenza cases. What should I do now?**

As always good hygiene (steps above) should be practiced to prevent the spread of germs.

Travelers should watch for flu like symptoms for up to 7 days after returning from an affected area. . If you are sick, or become sick during that 7 day period, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others. Call your healthcare provider if needed. Your healthcare provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed

**I have an upcoming trip planned to an area affected with swine influenza. Should I go?**

The CDC has current travel warnings and recommendations at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/>

**When is professional medical help needed?**

In children, consult your healthcare provider if these conditions develop:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In adults, emergency warning signs that need medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

**Are there medicines to treat swine flu?**

Yes. There are medications your physician might prescribe that can reduce the severity and duration of the flu. These drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms).

**Is there a vaccine for swine flu?**

There is no vaccine to protect humans from swine flu. However, CDC is working to develop a swine flu vaccine, but this will likely take several months.

June 5, 2009

**Can people catch swine flu from eating pork or eating food products from Mexico?**

No. Swine influenza viruses are not transmitted by food. You can not get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork and pork products is safe. Cooking pork to an internal temperature of 160°F kills the swine flu virus as it does other bacteria and viruses.

**Where can I get more information?**

For state information from the Wyoming Department of Health:

**[www.health.wyo.gov](http://www.health.wyo.gov)**

For federal information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

**<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>**